

FLEETING
THOUGHTS



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FLEETING THOUGHTS

BY



CAROLINE EDWARDS PRENTISS

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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK

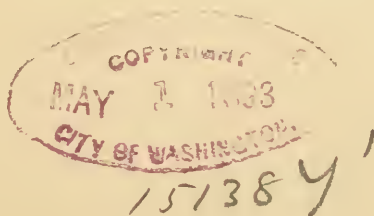
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CAROLINE EDWARDS PRENTISS

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FLEETING THOUGHTS.

In tiny bloom that wayward wings,
Sweet Summer hints delicious things
Of hopes, of friends, of lovers, so
To Love these fleeting thoughts outgo.

In quaintest measure Nature sings
Of myriad, wondrous hidden things,
By which we grief and joy discern,
So 't is to Life these lines return.

And here within these close-writ leaves,
A soul its earnest purpose weaves,
A soul that burning in Life's fire
Would speak to you its thought entire.

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FLEETING THOUGHTS.

FATE.

UNKNOWING thy own strength
Untried by Time's slow length,
 Would'st dare to challenge Fate?
Would'st fight or cringing cower
Before the baneful power,
 Grim-visaged, armored Fate?

As Flora's wreath unbinds
To breast the fiercest winds,
 She wills to challenge Fate ;
So, girt with Faith's fine steel,
I'd court the woe or weal
 In store for me by Fate.

THE CREATION.

WHERE hot flashes tear the heavens asunder
Opening is the vista of God's wonder,
There was crude creation erstwhile hid
Till it was to mighty birthright bid.

Marvellous then the sky and gardened green,
Finished with the flowers and fruits between,
But greater marvel was the next delight,
Life, and life that must with soul unite.

Whence the life had come, then whither went,
Was the final, subtle mystery sent,
And still, simple as the nursling born,
Know we only,—soon is spirit gone.

FIRST TO LAST.

LIGHT that is winging
Sight to the eye,
Breath that is bringing
Soul to defy,
This is Life's cry.

Eye that is sightless,
Voice that is dead,
Form that is mightless
Not to soul wed,
This is Life fled.

ASLEEP.

JUST where they laid her last
To gaze at thee she lies,
Then warm her hand met thine,—
Scarce breathed her gentle sighs.

But death soon closed the lid,
Soft paled the dimpled cheek,
And stilled the curving lips
That thine may never seek.

Then deadened is the silence,
Save for the shivering breeze,
That wakes the only moan
'Mid leafage of the trees.

For thou art fallen white
As she who lies so still,

And in thy pulseless state
Thou hast no pain or will.

But thou must rouse again,
Where she may never be,
And then there is no morrow
That wakeneth for thee.

For only is that day
Before thy vision sad
When she fell last asleep
Beside thee watching,—glad.

HEART'S-EASE.

WHERE boughs are widening in the breeze
To friendly cover winged delights
Or wild-affrighted things to ease,
'T is there my wandering soul alights
To tarry in green way, whereon
The gold lies piteously wan and faint,
E'en ghostly as the summer flown,
That fleeing sighed in gentle plaint.

'T is there the feet of Time are shod
So soft, they tread unbruised flowers,
That star-like gleam upon the sod,
While thoughts fair blossom with the hours ;
And there an-hungered for some sign,
I seem the closer to my dead,
Who unapparent, still incline
To kiss me, then are instant fled.

THE MARCH WIND.

O WIND that is wild in mighty unquiet,
Thou 'rt smiting so keen in cold and fierce riot,
That Winter's lost bareness were even less drear,
And dreariness deadened were less a dread fear ;
So finish thy fury, chastising forbear,
That Springtime may hasten thy power to share.

THE CHANGEFUL APRIL DAY.

ADOWN the clouds there slips a wedge
Of blue, as runs a ribboned edge,
And loosened from this sunny rift
The smiles and tears soft wayward drift,
This changeful April day.

Likewise in man's dark clouded hour,
Hath Love a swift illuming power
To blend its kiss with tearful smiles,
That saddest sadness quick beguiles,
Where grief has had full sway.

WHICH ?

Is the best tale unfolding

'Neath the pen or the brush,

Is the softer Love's scolding

'Neath the word or the flush ?

AN OLD PORTRAIT.

ARRAYED in quaint and dainty guise
Of fashion past, doth here arise
In shifting lights and shades, a face
Of gentle winsomeness and grace.

The gown, loose girt and scant of seam,
Is filmier far than one could dream
Of mortal weft and threaded loom,
And rivals e'en the flower's bloom.

Swift trespasses the rosy tint
That dyes the cheek with naught of stint,
While golden locks, in tenderness,
Soft cling as if in dear caress.

Gray eyes have glint of amber glow,
Deep tinged with darkened brown to show

Quick, varied moods, half pensive, glad,
That instant change to blithe or sad.

Oft hovering in my waking dreams,
This face, in happy nearness, seems
To dare my love and fondest kiss ;
Sweet winging vision ! Only this !

SELF-SACRIFICE.

CAN we kindle what we will,
Can we ardent purpose still,
Can we pain from self divorce
As Life runs his checkered course ?

Joy is subtle ; is it here
In the merry, trifling cheer
That the worldly pageant shows
As its pleasures rich unclose ?

No, 't is in self-sacrifice,—
Quickened once or twice or thrice,—
Where is kindled the white fire
That has naught of hot desire
To be quenched by floods of pain ;
There is joy with naught of stain.

HAPPINESS.

If suddenly is misery less,
Or grief is merged in happiness,
Then prison not thy new delight
But spend it lavish and requite.

THE ROSE.

KNOWEST thou the Rose possesses
Sweets denied to other flowers,
'T is through her that Love confesses
Hopes that gild fast-winged hours.

Knowest thou Love's Rose may wither,
Sweets then change to bitter taste,
While Time drags thee weighted whither
Life is but a dreary waste.

FORGIVENESS.

As slowly as the dawn
Is from the shadows caught,
Comes creeping late forgiveness
Begot in Pain's dark thought.

But quickly as the sun
Commingles East with West,
There follows sweet reward
Within forgiveness blessed.

MUSIC.

PICTURE my love ?

I can but say
That she is fair,
Fairer than day.

Picture my love ?

May I then paint
Winds that are free,
Spurning restraint ?

Picture my love ?

When I believe
That she is music
Sirens conceive !

SOLITUDE.

IN places that are hidden far,
And where no echo fills the spaces,
Save idle singing of the birds
That half awearied silence traces,
There comes to blossoms by the way
The happiness of holiday.

Harsh-ringing through our weary days
Loud jangling tunes their riot keep,
Unless in fairer solitude
They 're softly stilled in restful sleep,
Where floating are sweet dreams instead,
That there, to softest music wed,
Change grieving into merriment,
The healing balm by Nature sent.

2

JOY.

BELATED Spring her beauty shrines,
Till ardently the sun inclines
To green the slope, and freshly veil
In bridal white the hill and dale.

'T is then, the trembling breeze awakes
The joy that into gladness breaks,
As girdled is the earth with bloom,
Dismantling dreary Winter's gloom.

When Spring bestows this fragrant boon
Then laugh in merry, happy tune,
And of her sunny time free borrow
To ease thy Winter's pain or sorrow,
And pray that slow may wing the hours
Rose flushed with joy and perfumed flowers.

SORROW.

I WOULD wish my soul to be
Like the everlasting sea,
Guarding pearls that in the shell
Whiten 'neath the mermaid's spell,
While it hides in unknown deeps
Mystery that silent sleeps.

Yet I wish my soul to be
In its soundings clear and free,
So who wills to seek, may find
Pearls of soul, of heart, and mind,
That have whitened pure and sweet
Where the waves of sorrow meet.

ADORATION.

LEST quick thy winsome ways might cease,
No word of mine finds wished release,
But with Love's wise and cunning skill
I let mute worship speak my will.

THE PINK ARBUTUS.

RUDE-WAKENED from a frozen sleep
Where snows are sunlit, so less deep,
Arbutus dons her soft pink hood
To wander through the shivering wood ;

Sweet-welcoming every waif of green,
Where—through the pliant moss—'t is seen,
Bright-greeting in shy, gentle way,
Fair heralds of the warmer day.

TIME'S TOLL.

HATH he more ample wealth than I,
Who counts his fortune thousands high ?
While naught is mine but such poor wit
 As finds a lodgment in my brain,
Where endless fancies interknit
 To be unwound, to knit again
In one ne'er ending, rhythmic line
That is of Life a gracious sign.

I have no envy for the soul
Who pays to Time a silvered toll,
 To make his life the richer gain.
Ah, rather in fair Nature's flower
I would discern, to best attain,
 The sweeter and a lasting power,
And then of this largess to pay
The toll to Time in simple lay.

HOPE.

I WOULD my Hopes embark,
My Longings quick undo
Within the silver cloud
That floats in seas of blue.

For winging fleecy white,
It sails where never man
Has dared to desecrate
With stone-built arching span ;

Where waves are never severed
By mortal's puny dam,
That stays the whirling current
In momentary sham.

So with the cloud safe sailing,
My Hope can stem the tide
That sweeps the open sea
Of Heaven's azure wide.

BEWARE !

BEWARE the hideous evils
That blast in wasting scourge,
And in their vile pollution
Relentless chant a dirge.

FALSE PRIDE.

BUT scantily lit is the dungeon,
Where prisoned is bitter, false pride
That only grows harsh as time passes,
If under dark walls it abide.

But were it quick loosened in sunshine,
Escaping the ban of grilled bars,
'T were sweetened, ennobled, made helpful,
A shield against weakness that mars.

THE DANDELION.

SWEET Dandelion, thou 'rt early seen,
The first to crown with gold the green,
And lingering past the longest noon
Thou glowest with the crescent moon,
While buttercups around thee play
Like satellites that shine by day.

But with the moon then sleepest thou,
And all thy subjects fealty vow,
In sleeping when thou sleeping art ;
So when the sunlit hours depart,
Far lost is all the yellow fire
That only was their day-attire.

WOOING.

As I woo thee, Sweet,
 Luckless 't is revealed,
That I am half blind
 Is thy light concealed.

So in pity, stay
 Nigh me that I see
Thee, the only one
 That exists for me.

IN VAIN.

IN days through which we pass
I note that men, who mad,
Had chased and gotten gold,
To have it were not glad.

For life 's a wilderness
Where souls, in mocking pain,
Are constant in reminder
That gold was chased in vain.

CHARITY.

PURE and stainless fall' the flakes of snow,
Winging as the winds have listed, slow ;
Messengers announcing Christ's own Day
For He came through Winter's whitened way.

So let Kindnesses and Charity
Steal their cheering way thus silently,
Lovely messengers of heavenly healing,
Sweetest peace and tender grace revealing.

SUNSHINE AND SHOWER.

ONE bright summer morning the Sunshine and Shower
Avowed that as rivals they would kiss some wee flower ;
The Sunshine averred 't was her kiss would unfold
Its leaves, till they shining should gleam with rich gold.

The Shower maintained that in her was the power
To bathe with her tears the opening flower,
Till fair it would glisten a beautiful gem,
The sweetest of flowers in Spring's diadem.

So each in her striving to show first her face,
Arose in the sky in the one open space,
And thus to full glory awoke the wee flower,
The daughter of Sunshine, yet fostered by Shower.

LOVE SONG.

WHERE faintest of sunlight watching keeps,
Where wavering shadow slowing creeps,
Where earliest twilight favoring sleeps,
There would I be !

Where murmuring music wings the breeze
In tenderest sighing sung in trees
To waken the memories faint that please,
There come to me !

Where fluttering branches weave the nest
Where wearied seagulls lulled may rest,
Where lingering twilight lights the West,
There bide with me !

THE EDELWEISS.

I WOULD liken not my love
To the rose, that poets say,
Is the breath of summer time
And with Summer fades away.

Nor would I my own true love
To the lilies white compare ;
For they wither when the day
Winter's coronet must wear.

But I liken my fond love
To the star-like edelweiss,
That its blossomed fairness keeps
Where is Summer's mountain ice.

LOST AND FOUND.

Lost in love is Self,
 Lost and never found,
But is never Love
 Lost so 't is not found.

3

PLEASURE OR SORROW?

WHISPERS the Past soft sighing,
Kissing the Day in dying,
“What shall I give thee hieing,
Mirth or deep sorrow sighing?”

Day to the Past sweet singeth,
As to the Morrow it wingeth,
“Give me such pleasure as clingeth
In the great joy Love bringeth.”

NIGHT.

Out of the daylight
 Into the night,
Shadows the flight
 Of Life's great might.

So in thy long quest
 Seeking for rest,
Find it expressed
 In Night's calm breast.

For in Night's star-gold,
 Sad thoughts of old
Plaintively told,
 In radiance unfold.

While in its moonbeams,
 Happiness seems
The purest lit gleams
 Of past day-dreams.

FAIRY-FOLK.

THE long and dismal girdling
Of night falls 'round the green
Of meadow, marsh, and mountain
That long have sunlit been.

So, earth is one dark wonder,
Until the harvest moon
Bewitches and soft blanches
The green as were it noon.

Then dance the quaintest figures,
The gentle fairy-folk,
In tune to wild, sweet music
That from the woodland broke.

Till maddening is the revel
Within the charmèd close,
When bold, impatient morning
Its roseate smiling shows.

THE SEA.

FAST is held the surging sea
By the white encircling lea
That uncertain, shifts so light
As the waves quick lend it flight,
Whirling off in heavy swell
Seaweed, sand, and tiny shell ;

Like the surgings of the sea
So the passions mighty be,
Swift encroaching, to surprise,
To despoil our hidden lives,
If not stayed by lines as light
As the margined sand in sight ;
Lines of love that subtle, strong,
Circling holds them back from wrong.

MINE OR THINE.

I HAVE a thought
I will to be,
Winging uncaught,
Till reaching thee.

With sweetness fraught
Speeding from thee,
Comes the same thought
Homeward to me.

Is then the thought
Mine to keep free,
Or in flight caught
Thine e'er to be ?

THE BABY.

UNLESS the sun is flashing gold,
The fire is from the opal missed ;
'T was so thine eyes had only tints
Of violet, deepening amethyst,
Until the Sun of Love thee kissed.

But Love in kissing kindles light
That quickens to the glowing flame
That never more will dimly flicker,
But will bright burn fore'er the same,
As when at first thy baby came.

ROSES AND CLOVER.

THOUGH the days of dreams are over
When the roses and white clover,—
Lovely, odorous deceits,—
Jealous hoard their garnered sweets ;
Still the dreams ne'er cease their singing,
From their prison place swift winging,
As light-caught in rhythmic lore,
They, in song, live evermore.

DREAMS.

I WONDER hast thou dreamed the dreams
Where all in sweet confusion seems,
And yet apart from worldly din,
A dream some other dream within.

Where is the Self that hides away,
Half shy and shamed in glaring day,
Grown bolder in the nameless power
Of sleep's all too fast winging hour ;

Where hovering, fled from spirit lands,
Are shadowy forms whose dim, soft hands
Convey through all thy sleeping rest,
The tenderness that calms thy breast ;

Where fair and countless things of day
Renew their fascinating sway,
And all, in sweet confusion, seems
To echo dreams of other dreams.

YESTERDAY.

THE fleeting Day may burdened be,
The Morrow holds uncertainty ;
But sunshine born of Yesterday
Can steal the shadows from To-day
And lend to newer things, no less
A radiant, sunlit loveliness.

TWILIGHT.

SOFT mingling in thy gray decline,
Is gold,—like that long slept in wine,—
Whereon is richer red inscribed,
With flushing purple once applied.

Then slow this fiery, amber drifts
To cleave thy gloom with glowing rifts,
Till wandering far, it weary faints
And fallen dark no longer paints.

SELF-MASTERY.

SWEEPS o'er the fields a voice to Faith,
A voice of mortal, not of wraith,
In lonely way abiding far,
On mountain ledge where sleeps the star.

This voice there bides to shrive the soul,
To yield the world the smaller dole,
To wrestle with familiar sin
That knocks without, springs up within,

To battle with temptations sweet
That rife in wildness would defeat
And thwart the passionate desire,
To quell ambition's restless fire.

Sweeps o'er the fields this voice to Faith,
"In conq'ring I am free," it saith,

“And yet my path is sorrow strewn,
If thou deniest me thy boon.”

Soft echoes this despairing plea,
“’T is kinship I must have with thee,
Some balm thou hast to ease the hurt
Self-mastery does not avert.

“Hast thou unfaltering the will
To heal my wound with gentle skill,
My lurking dreariness to lull,
My weary loneliness to dull?”

Then to this voice Faith stealeth near,
Revealing deep, pervading cheer
That blendeth with Self-Mastery
Close, sweet-companioned e’er to be.

FOLLY.

TANGLED deft and silken thin,
Folly's web keeps fast within,
Fascinated, simple things,
Fluttering vain their broken wings.

THE MOSAIC.

A FLECK of tender green
 'Gainst white or azure blue,
And here or there a dash
 Of violets' sweet hue,
With buttercups that glow
 Like drops of golden dew,
These make the fair mosaic
 That Spring doth lay for you.

So in thy one short day
 Of sunshine and of shower,
As many are the hues
 As those that tint the flower ;
For grief and joy and love
 May tone the fleeting hour,
Make thee a fair mosaic
 That has enduring power.

AMBITION.

AMBITION is as limitless
As purest ether in blank space,
Far-reaching as the subtle winds
That rifling, gave each other chase.

It masters every friend and foe
That in the elements abide,
Proceeding then in triumph where
Safe journey was of yore denied.

MY DARLING.

NOT a shadow but hides in its fold
The fair grace of the maid who lies cold,
While the tremulous note of the bird
Seems to echo her last loving word.

So the sunbeams that yellow the green,
Or the flow'rets upspringing between,
Are caprices that lighten the day,
As her moods ever sweetened her sway.

In the stillness of deep mountain springs,
In the calm that the waning day brings,
In the lily face wet with the dew,
I am seeing her pure soul anew.

So when willows kiss faintly the stream,
'T is in weeping that makes my sad dream

All the sadder, for hearing the strain
That but quickens my hot tears again,

As I think of my heart-rending cry,
When the angels came hovering nigh
To soft pillow my darling's fair head,
On their wings, oh, so gently outspread !

Now I long but to hasten the days,
To lift sooner the veil that dark-stays
Me from flying o'er measureless space,
To fold close to my heart this lost face.

SWEET COMFORTINGS.

WHERE silent fall the snows or blossoms light,
In smooth and dainty driftings, fair and white,
O'er mortals sleeping in eternal rest,
'T is there, thou makest longing, eager quest,
'Midst haunting shadows, flitting to and fro,
For semblances of faces, memories show ;
Of faces long among the dead, they say,
Swift vanished with the sun that crowns the day.

So with imaginings, sad but strangely sweet,
Thou dwellest in this blissful, fond deceit,
That half thy sorrowing with joy repays ;
For thus in dreaming thou can'st speed thy days
Communing with the dimly winging throng
Of loved ones, hidden from thy sight, not long.

FAIR MARGUERITE.

FAIR Marguerite,
So slender sweet,
Thou art the maiden's dear delight ;
For in thy petals snowy white,
Safe hide the secrets of the heart,
That only thou canst true impart.

But, Marguerite,
Though true and sweet,
She 'll rob thee of each tiny wing
In ruthless, silly questioning,
To know if Love hath wandering been,
Or if he speeds to woo and win.

Then, Marguerite,
Though fair and sweet,
She hath for thee no lingering care ;
'T is but her love she would ensnare,
And thou mayst die forgotten now,
While she but dreams of lover's vow.

LOVE-LIGHT.

UPRISING in splendor, O Sovereign of Night,
Quick loosen thy love-light the darkness despite,
Then soft kiss the greenwood with wondrous
 white gleams,
Till quivering leafage all luminous seems.

YEARNING.

IN travail, 'midst the changing way
Of tangled Time and Death's delay,
I yearn, as we in pain must yearn,
The quickened life of heaven to learn.

WHEN WINTER WHITE WILL CLOSE ON ME.

I 'm long belated in Life's journey,
And days are cruel with me sped,
While few my wonted haunts are treading
As more are to the homeland fled.

I 'm worn with soberness for kinship
And seaward turn, there lone to stay,
While Indian Summer warms the waste
Where was Death's devastating sway.

Though soon, I fear not soon enough,
The Winter white will close on me ;
'T was winging slow, but now comes fast,
Soft blown in snow clouds o'er the sea.

DOUBT.

WE willing wade the pools of Life,
If shallow, shimmering clear ;
But if they 're dark, with reeds run rife,
We halt with instant fear.

THE BETTER SELF.

As in a whirlwind we go round
 Reviewing silly platitudes,
While light, the seeming Self parades
 Its trick of ease and surface moods ;

Till out of pain we deeper delve
 To find new-wakened consciousness
That must in urgent, devious ways
 Its fervent gratitude express

In love that in the sounding finds
 Sweet favor in the ears of men,
As proving that the seeming Self,
 A better Self is born again.

JUNE.

WHEN grasses wing, as dauntless rovers,
To feather green the barren field,
And daisies speckle white the clovers,
That else were but a rosy shield,
Then fledglings in their matin tune
Sing soft the songs of early June.

But when the rose is drooping over,
And when the wind-worn grasses sway
Aweary as sweet-freighted clover,
And daisies faint in warmer way,
Then fallen as in gentle swoon,
Its freshness gone, is later June.

THE BUTTERFLY.

BLACK as night and speckled yellow,
He's a roguish, impish fellow,
Saucy, blithe, and debonair,
Seeking pleasure everywhere.

Naught he gives in barter changing,
For the plunder that in ranging
O'er the gardens many a mile,
He is stealing, lost in guile.

Kissing in the orchard close,
Wayward, blossoming brier-rose,
Kissing, likewise, clovers hid
Tall and feathery grass amid.

Then from waxen, lily lips,
Long and long he greedy sips,

Unsurfeited, though overfilled,
With the wine so white distilled.

Thirsting yet, he drinks instead
From the golden flower-bed,
Sweeter mead, and brewed so strong
That he lingers all too long.

Still the arrant thief confesses
All the charm his life possesses,
Vaunting gay the trifling ways
Wherein he spends his summer days.

Can we blame him, you or I,
Or his boldest trick decry?
Would we not to sweets incline
If they are of joy the sign?

PRESENTIMENT.

How do I know that Springtime is here ?
Just as you know when loved ones come near ;
Only by signs that fill empty space,
Prophetic foretelling of blossom or face.

How do I know that Summer is done ?
Just as you know Love's victory won ;
Only by blossoms that ripen full sweet
Where the South wind and the sun of Love meet.

How do I know that Winter draws nigh ?
Just as you know Love's heart-broken cry
That in the shivering winds of cold strife,
Gustily sounds in the Winter of Life.

A LIGHT TASK.

I AM witless and graceless, unless
In thy sunny, sweet smiling I bask,
But if oft thou wilt lighten my darkness,
'T is the quicker I 'll lighten thy task.

ON TAKING THE VEIL.

No binding fetters thou wouldst wear
To trammel thee in earnest work,
No bondage of dear human care,
Where sweetly selfish claims may lurk.

Thou wouldst be free as yonder bird,
Swift-winged to the Master's call,
And with its carollings be heard
In song, escaping human thrall.

Such freedom fits not I believe
Save careless bird, whose sweet songs thrill
The gladdened sense, but ne'er relieve
The suffering soul, nor anguish still.

But thou must know some other heart
That beats in pulsing with thine own,

If thou wouldst heavenly love impart
And give sweet bread instead of stone.

So thou must walk close hand in hand
With Life where passion is quick spent,
To learn that sympathies expand
Where want and misery are sent.

'T is thus I see thee with dismay
Enroll thy vow to sheltered be,
Where all thy youthful hopes decay,
And thou art held fast bound, not free.

I beg thee not to immolate
Thy lovely, living self ; entombed
Where lost is all thy present state,
If once are sable robes assumed.

THE MONK.

IN strong, protecting manhood,
Thou 'rt like the risen day,
That with its sun swift passing
Must wing its separate way.

Thou dost to heavenly music
A sovereign passion choose,
To gain in thy Life's journey
What other mortals lose.

Thou long'st to spend thy power
To lessen pain and grief,
To share thy strength to dower
Lost souls with sure relief.

Thou long'st to be in unison
With self, with man, with God,

True moulded in the likeness
Of Jesus, long adored.

Thou wouldst that thy soul's fire,
Shine bright as brightest gold,
To radiate thy longings
In duties manifold.

But thou dost in thy choosing
The earthly love forswear,
That wiser men have cherished
As God's best gift and care.

THE SUBTLE SNARE.

It nowise seems a good,
 To dally with the thief
Who undermines the conscience
 And steals its best belief.

Beginning with the onset
 That subtly is a snare,
Plant firm thy strong defences
 And open war declare.

STRENGTH OF THE FOREST.

By Winter's storm thou art bereft
Of foliage, falling in a weft
To smooth thy roughened roots with green,
Until in nakedness thou 'rt seen.

While braver than thy offspring, thou
Art living on to clothe thy bough
With robing that each year is fresh,
Green veiling thee in leafy mesh.

So as our youthful graces change
In Time's remorseless, sweeping range,
Shall we, in ruth for self so vain,
But crave to have them back again?

Or strong as thou, shall we anew
Grow beauties of the soul, not few,
That living we may freshly be
Soft clothed in Immortality?

THE HEART'S DESIRE.

DEAR Violet, thy wings of blue
Enfold the tiny drop of dew,
That in its sparkling crystal clear,
Is but thy grieving soul's one tear.

In gentle, shy humility,
Thou art not discontent to be
O'ershadowed by the gaudy flowers,
That near thee sway in Springtime hours.

But thou art foolish pining, lest
Thou mayest die and ne'er arrest
The one true glance, that, with sweet fire,
Would kiss thee in full heart's desire.

THE BETROTHAL.

WHEN rose blossoms wildly stray
 'Midst the briers to repose,
If comes Love in winsome way,
 Kisses on thy lips to close,
Then ere roses red or white
 Lose their loveliness to perish,
Love thy faith will sweet requite,
 Vowing ever thee to cherish.

SOUL WORSHIP.

To reverently render the rhythm
Of the soul's finely vibrating chord,
In musical modulation,
Is spirit to heaven restored.

GOOD NIGHT.

CAN only a kiss,
No other than this,
Reveal in its winging a fragrance so sweet ?
Can only a word,
Low spoken, scarce heard,
Give strongest assurance of love I entreat ?

As lily and rose,
When petals uncloze,
Are freeing rare perfumes in gathering flight,
The kiss and the word,
So mingled are heard,
When baby lips whisper to mother good night.

REALITY.

A FANCIED grief may range
Through long and clouded years,
To cheat thee of thy gladness,
To weight thee with dark fears ;

While real and aching thoughts
May wake a sweet refrain,
That lifts thee from thy sadness,
And eases bitter pain.

ECSTASY.

HITHER and thither, breasting the sea,
Wings the North wind, daring and free,
Skimming the crests of billowy foam,
Bathing in whiteness shoreward to roam ;

Then steeped in the scent of odorous bloom,
Drunk with its nectar, happiest doom,
Reckless of measure, is the salt breeze
Loosing its fragrance 'mid the pine trees.

There you and I would fain follow it so
That its pure breath may over us blow ;
Breath of the balsam, breath of the sea,
Thine is the kiss of sweet ecstasy.

THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

FROM thy nosegay plucked with care,
Dimpled softly here and there
 With the blue that in Love's eyes
 Is the light of Paradise,
I would steal one blossom fair,
 To keep as mine.

As green ferns their fringing keep
Round forget-me-nots asleep,
 So dark lashes guard thine eyes
 Barring glimpse of Paradise,
Out of which I'd steal and keep
 One glance as mine.

While the bee the honey sips,
From the nosegay where he dips,
 I would its fragrance little prize
 If one sweet of Paradise
I might steal from thy soft lips,
 To keep as mine.

WANT.

BEYOND all else is Want
The one engulfing wave
From which I would, in pity,
The wretched victim save.

For misery lacks all defence
Against Life's whirling swell,
Unless 't is safe protected
By Plenty's favoring spell.

THE SCRIBBLER.

'T is but a trick to scribble rhymes,
That clever penmen gain betimes,
And were naught else in poesy,
Then laurel crowned would many be.

But if their rhymes were luminous lit
With phantasy divinely writ,
That radiant shone, not fitfully,
Methinks 't were more like poesy.

FREEDOM.

SAY you we're free if broke the chain
That custom links, though strong, in vain?
Or we are free if love, if hate,
If meaner jealousies abate?

As held in bondage outwardly,
I claim there's naught that 'scapeth free
Save thought, unquelled by mortal power
Outlasting Time's one little hour.

BABY LORE.

'MID busy cares I dream awhile
Of a sunny maid whose wise intent
Is spoken well in radiant smile,
Or else 't is in her blue eyes spent.

For yet, her rosy lips ne'er speak
In other than an unknown tongue ;
Unknown, save as the dimples in her cheek
Tell thoughts as clear as can be sung.

And from her wee and chubby fists,
From cheeks that flushing, then flush less,
From golden tress that wayward twists,
From endless signs, I certain guess
The alphabet of baby lore,
Whereof no scholar knows the more.

THE KISS.

'T is hardly a something, no tangible thing,
And light in the passing as though 't were on wing.
'T is naught in the keeping, my Marjorie dear,
Though sweet in the sharing when thou comest near.

'T is almost a nothing, so soft its impress,
But tenderly given, a weight none the less,
Which, leaving the sweetest of seals on my heart,
Remains there unbroken by all worldly art.

To lovers and mothers 't is always the measure
Of love, that, in lingering, is oft the one treasure
That sleeps in the memory through all weal or woes,
And wakened at pleasure, lulls saddest heart-throes.

THE SWEET PEA.

SUNLIT with varied tintings
That rainbows vie to match,
Thou glowest with the glintings
That warm the garden patch.

So, fairy that is fairest,
If earth-bound thou must be,
The sweet of sweets thou sharest
With butterfly or bee.

But, fairy that is fairest,
If winging thou art free,
And sweets in wandering bearest,
Then bring them home to me.

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TO CUPID.

GIVE thy caresses, my Sweet,
If by glad chance we may meet.

Something of Self to be mine,
Give as I give to be thine.

Waking as thou hast the will,
Love's swiftly pulsating thrill.

CONDEMNED.

I 'm sick of myself and condemned
By Self that of Self is unshriven ;
I 'm sick of myself and commend
Myself to be gracious forgiven.

DEATH'S WEAVING.

SOME days are sadly fled,
Days woven with the thread
Spun dark in fateful loom,
Revolved in ceaseless gloom.

Some days each gladsome thing
So wakes our joy to sing,
That we would fain believe
That they with sunshine weave.

These days we long to keep,
Unending with kind sleep,
Long spinning them to seem
The shadowless, sweet dream
Wherein we fain forget
Fast weaving is Death's net.

SUMMER'S LAVISHNESS.

DEAR Summer, thine the subtleness of charm,
The gently soothing, soft-caressing balm,
 Beguiling heart and soul away in dreams,
When languorous, thy lulling winds unseen
Cool fan the traceries of tender green,
 Till fair, thy loveliness perpetual seems.

Now idle loitering none can deem amiss
In ways where swaying grain the meadows kiss ;
 But best I revel in thy ravishment,
Where out of lonesome stillness, low begins
The tuneless whirr of gauzy wings, that spins
 Its length to swelling harmonies soft-blent.

There valleys coy their treasured sweets disclose,
And scarcely hid by filmy mist there shows
 A lofty peak, remote in banishment.

But in the forest wild, apart from din,
Thy tranquillness of brooding peace may win
Me when I 'm worn aweary, with fight spent.

Wee, crawling things there glide from tangled weeds,
And birds, slow-hovering, poise amid the reeds,
To yield to them sad thoughts were easing grief ;
Ah, Summer, yes, 't is ever thine the rôle,
Wanton to spend thy wealth. The niggard's dole
Thou scornest. Thy lavishness is God's relief.

THE SUNFLOWER.

I FAIN obey the mandates of the Sun
And turn where'er his sway is first begun,
So when he westward wings across the plain
I follow him his glances to regain.

Yet I had shame, as would a timid dove,
To seem to court a sovereign as my love,
If he 'd not whispered low as he quick passed,
"Thou art my sweetheart ; so it was forecast."

NO SECRET.

As surely as the grass upholds
 Its face to kisses of the morning dew,
And surely as each blade unfolds,
 If we two meet, must love ensue.

As new-mown grasses sweet convey
 Their incense to the passers-by,
We fain betray our shy dismay,
 Because we love, we know not why.

THE FACE AND THE FLOWER.

SOFT uncloses the wood-blossom white,
Till its fairness to me is the light
That I see in the sweet woman-face,
Where the glowing ideals I trace.

So I reverently bow to the bloom
That in generous nature has room,
And in measuring Infinite Power,
I now worship both fair face and flower.

For in one and the other I find
The sweet loveliness of the pure mind,
That is breath of a fragrance divine
That I will to be evermore mine.

A TRUE WOMAN.

IN weak and wondrous womanhood

Thou art more purely flower-sweet
Than white and wind-bruised lilies are,
While subtly linked in thee there meet
A mystic-pleading, thrilling charm,
A gracious, deep-perfected calm.

Though as beholden to the sun

Thou art exultant, blithe with hope,
And strong inspired by the winds
Thou art exalted, wise to cope
With hurrying days that drive thee where
Thou breathest cold, embittered air ;

Withal, thou art content to be

In homely duties held fast bound,
Though mighty fervors are unquenched
And fixed fidelity thou hast
Unslumbering and inviolate,
Ah, woman true, where is thy mate !

FRIENDSHIP.

THE richest yield of friendship
Is trustfulness complete,
Wherein is thought ne'er hidden
In prudent, far retreat,

But in the simple language
Of loyal brotherhood
It speaks in touch or glances
So certain understood.

MY BIRTHRIGHT.

SOFT lying in the fruitful womb,
I am unwitting of my doom,
Until I am in coldness thrust
Upon Earth's bed of green-grown dust.

Unveiled and with the light unsoft,
I am to look around, aloft,
Save where I 'm blinded with the glare,
And I am naked, soon to wear

The weaving of the sun, the air,
That likewise runneth 'round my hair ;
Then I am with my feeble fingers
To lift the shadow dark that lingers.

So with wee feet I am to mount,
The steps too many e'er to count,

But I am better shod for this
That I was born of wedded bliss.

This is my glad inheritance,
Denied me had it been my chance
To war against the direful lot
But mine, if I were sin-begot.

COMPENSATION.

FAIR compensation greets us when
O'er-wearied once and once again,
We leave the prose of history
For Fancy's witching mystery.

Wherein is naught of time or measure
To stay the all-absorbing pleasure,
As in her sweet, enticing way
We linger lost in dream's delay.

SONG.

MID-AIR there softly wings
The song the poet sings,
That, like a floating star,
Sheds flashing light afar ;
Light stolen from the sky
Where Love and Wisdom lie.

SLEEP.

THE gay world and its people are dimming
In the dark that is gathering near,
That invasive and subtle as death is,
Is but sleep that we court without fear.

THE SONG WITHOUT WORDS.

THE song that is sung to set phrasing
Is attuned to the ears of all men,
'T is sung to the ages slow passing,
'T is sung for the nonce, then again.

But the song that is sung without wording
Is sung for one listening ear,
In mystic soft notes of Love's language,
The sweetest that mortals can hear.

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SUMMER WINDFALLS.

THE far and early scattered windfalls
Are but the slender, speckled fruits,
Than wan, are even paler hearted,
As fed from feeble, sapless roots.

Had they been left the boughs between,
Light swinging as they first had swung,
They might have changed to rosy wonders,
The fairest, all the fruits among.

So is the sweetest ripening ours
That sunny changing seasons bring,
And mellowed grows the stony heart,
If we to Faith but steadfast cling.

LOVE'S AMULET.

HALF green, half tawny dressed, Oh Mignonette !
When sensitive thine eyes with dew are wet,
Thou art the one and only Amulet
That I would send to Love to love beget.

FAREWELL.

THE thing I willing lose,
And never willing choose,
 Is this, to speak farewells ;
I would that my good-by
Sped in the wind-born sigh,
 That saddest grieving tells.

The thing I willing choose,
And never willing lose,
 Is this, to speak my greeting ;
For wind-born sighs convey
But griefs, and ne'er betray
 The joys of happy meeting.

THE CRUEL SOVEREIGN.

THY hands are strong to bend the bow,
So warping it, that arrows fly
Whithersoever thou hast will,
Thy golden welfare to espy,

E'en where thy serfs, in hopelessness,
May starve unfed, to ease thy way,
Already paved with tithes and tears,
Rude wrested 'neath thy heartless sway.

Oh, stay thy hard, false hand awhile,
Withdraw thy mastering, merciless greed,
To win the eager smile, conceived
By subjects lightened of thy need.

Then from thy quiver, overfull
But lance one dart and ever quell

The cruel war, then one t' annul
The laws, that men from home expel.

Then hurl with all thy might another,
That sure as with a poisoned barb,
Would punish him who tempts thy brother
In friendly and insidious garb.

Methinks, if thou would'st speed fresh darts,
If only these, soon thou would'st be,
More rich repaid in grateful hearts
That long would bless thy sovereignty.

THE GRAVE.

DEEPER no cleft than the grave,
Darkly closing o'er earthly desire ;
Softer no bed than its clay,
When the sorrows of life sorely tire.

WHIMSICAL FAIRIES.

IT is seemly for some to be singing,
In the lyrical line long or short,
Of the whimsical fairies, that winging,
In our worldly domain e'er disport.

There are elfins of Gossip and Slander,
Both so small that they hide in a leaf,
That wild blown, where the winds vagrant wander,
May the fairest fame steal like a thief.

There are treacherous elfins of Malice,
E'en so wee that forgotten they sleep
In Hatred's dark, poisonous chalice,
Where the bitterest gall they sly steep.

With the wiseacre's croak it behooves me
To warn of these whimsical folk,

That are lurking in shadows to wrap thee,
In the folds of anxiety's cloak.

But deep hidden in Love's blushing roses,
Are bright fays, of whom one is Good Will,
Who so subtly its fragrance disposes,
Not the vicious her sweetness can kill.

THE THISTLE.

THOU 'RT fitting emblem of the Scottish clan,
Though blue and violet-tinted like the myrtle,
For thou art sharper-weaponed than the man,
Bare-kneed and clad in scarlet-plaided kirtle.

Though girt with thorns thou mayest the gentler be,
When bursting forth beneath the Sun's caresses,
Or when the ruder winds have worsted thee,
To leave thee white, all stripped of purple tresses.

So thou art erstwhile, fair and bravely dressed,
As any warlike Scot in tangled trapping,
But downy grown, despite thy prickly nest,
Thou 'rt sweet as he, when caught in love dreams
napping.

UNBOUGHTEN WITH GOLD.

As prized by the mimics of fashion,
Are orchids unrooted in earth,
So the goal of the great lady's passion,
Is Fortune, whose love-roots have dearth.

She chose, and was vain in the choosing
Advantage that wanes in a night ;
She lost, and sad-wept in the losing,
The charms that bed deep in delight.

Too late she would crave the one favor,
That never is boughten with gold ;
Love's violet, seldom near neighbor
To orchids in market when sold.

WHAT EVERYONE KNOWS.

DEEP in the heart of the rose
Summer's sweet mystery grows,
 How came it there ?
 Nobody knows.
Thorns overlay the long stem
Guarding this dew-sparkling gem,
 Why they are there,
 Everyone knows.

Deep in the human heart glows
Fervor that Love can disclose,
 How came it there ?
 Nobody knows.
Would you the fair blossoms glean
Hidden in Love's sweet demesne ?
 Then seek you there
 What everyone knows.

THE MIDSUMMER DROUGHT.

SLOW altering under thy ban
The flowering Summer lies wan,
While honey-drops overweight bees,
So enfeebling thy long scorching breeze ;
And wilfully vagrant, there 's naught
To stray from the close, shadow caught,
Save streams, of thy glow someway jealous,
That lucklessly court thee, too zealous.

The trees and the grasses droop faint,
The kine, patient beasts, make no plaint,
While noticing not that arise
The storm-laden clouds, to surprise,
Swift closing them 'round in desire
To quench thy long midsummer fire.

RECOMPENSE.

OLD Time, as with a priestly power.
Is punishing with penanced hour,
The better to anoint us last
With gladness that the saints forecast.

THE CLEMATIS.

THOU art wan in the whitest of whiteness,
 Though the Summer's warm kiss soft allures,
And so fair is thy feathery lightness,
 That thy sovereign grace it assures.

While so quick in the Summer's brief daytime
 Thou dost mantle the brier grown fence,
That I wonder, if long were thy playtime,
 Would'st thou climb to meet heaven's defence.

HOMESICKNESS.

OH, I would I could see the wild marsh,
Where the willowy reeds grow so high,
Where the grasses run rank and to waste,
Where the waters are kissing the sky.

Where the sea-gulls are strong in their might,
To steal from the waves their live prey,
Where the white-feathered barks softly drift
In their laziest, wandering way.

And 't is there in this low land that range
The myriad and strangely wild things,
That are creeping, perchance, in their slowness,
Or are cleaving the air with curved wings.

There the lingering gleam of the sun
Is unbroken in crossing the fen,

As the moon-risen tide calmly sweeps
A glad denizen, restless till then.

Oh, I 'm wearied of mountains, so close,
That I seem to be prisoned by trees ;
For they keep from me ever the whiff
Of the cool and brine-freshened breeze.

The one breeze that I 've pined for so long,
That my life is but little to me,
Unless—I can once again hear
The ne'er-ending song of the sea.

IMPULSE.

IMPORTUNATE indeed,
Is this one fiery steed
Of stormy Passion's need.

If heated with its word,
The longing hot is stirred
As quick as if steel-spurred.

But Reason's nod and beck
May curb the charger's neck
As if with tightened check.

For safe she guides with skill,
Until the steed is still
As if in martial drill.

FIDELITY.

TRUE allegiance will not falter
Till the seas their currents alter,
Or white-paling is the sun
When the day is first begun.

Should the tigress, sweet, benign,
Her savage young to man resign,
Should the dead be quick again
Then might end its splendid reign.

LOVE.

GLAD-HEARTED as the dawning
And hopeful as the day,
Is Love if naught of wronging
His winging doth delay.

But sad as saddest shadow,
That dismal sleeps in night,
Is Love if aught of wronging
Should sudden stay his flight.

THE SUGAR MAPLE.

AWEARIED with its monotone,
Thy green hath tender yellow grown,
Whereon there chase the reddened tints
To warm thy mellowed golden glints,
Until with flame thou art alive.
A flame that may not long survive.

But coursing through thy heart the same,
There runs a sweeter amber flame
That when thou 'rt bleeding under pain
Doth fall in drops of golden rain,
Which jealous gathered one by one,
For thy lost glory may atone.

FASHIONED FAIR.

'T is fashioned fair, the autumn season,
But fashioned fairer by the reason
Of Winter's chill and fickle mood,
That crowns with hoary, jewelled hood ;

So fashion fair thyself to be
The fairer if Life's changing free,
Must alter sad thy early days
To quicken kinder Wisdom's ways.

MY IDEAL HERO.

My ideal hero lacks in naught
Though he the stress of life obeys,
And has no wish to tune the lyre,
Soft singing sweetest roundelays,

The braver he and quick to dare
In fighting Poverty rough spoken,
Than knight of old, whose ready lance
Won fairest gentledame's love token.

Thus woven in prosaic life,
I find the strand of poesy,
That is the more inspired lore,
Than that light wrought in phantasy.

MY QUEEN.

IN the purple of thy state
Thou art vested, but thy face
Nestles cold against the ermine,
While the sweet and native grace
Of thy stateliness is seen,
That proclaims thee once a queen.

Sad, I wis not if thou knowest,
Proudest of thy long proud race,
That I place a rose with thee,
I, who of the populace,
Can but hide it there unseen,
As thou, living, wast a queen.

Though thou art so sweetly smothered
In the flowers that none displace,
Still is one white blossom mine,
Nigh to thee to kiss thy face,
As I dare, if but unseen,
So to claim thee dead, my queen.

THE KEEPSAKE.

By the yeoman or gentle of blood,
Is most cherished as keepsake, the bud,
If 't was grown in the garden of love,
Having stolen the spiced odors thereof.

A NIGHT SONG.

IN meadows, lit by fireflies,
Where crickets dance 'mid cheery cries,
The katydids their tunes essay
In sweetly dolorous roundelay.

While nigh, the frogs are croaking hoarse
As frogs are wont in wayward course,
To vie with owls, who screech unseen
And homage render Night as queen.

But nightingales chant pæans to Night,
And drink with passionate delight
Elixir that the dews distil
As potent as the Gods could will.

LONGINGS.

As bees have longings for hid sweets,
And lovers for the shy deceits
That feign defences coy and teasing,
Then swift cajole for joy of pleasing ;

As timid violets court the dew,
As sceptics would their faith renew,
As streams their source are loth in leaving
Through open meadows mazy weaving,

So we have longings e'er to cheat
Grim Death and would his sway defeat,
To save our loved ones that he winneth,
As soon as our sweet reign beginneth.

THE LAST GOLDENROD.

I AM lithe and so tall uprising
That I bend to the grasses low,
As I whisper the sad advising
That I must to the Winter go.

For I wane when the moon is crescent
And I shiver with dread alarm,
Since my gold is as evanescent
As this Indian Summer's calm.

And I'm faltering in my kisses,
And my purposes weaken and fail,
As I wish that the day, such as this is,
May in lingering, never pale.

As I yield my desire I'm thrilling
With the sense of a sweet sacrifice,
And I die with my kisses more willing
In the hope of a near paradise.

PYGMALION AND GALATEA.

THOUGH fallen nigh, the hands ne'er close
To save the sweetly blossomed rose,
And if the birds should winging rise
To sweep the cheek, 't were no surprise.

While long this form its stillness keeps,
Though every anguished soul sad weeps,
For she is imaged by thy dreams
In loveliness that fairest seems,

But now fast sleeping, fashioned white,
Thou wilt 'st to wake her from its night,
And wakened so invite thy kiss,
No longer mere imagined bliss.

SUCCESS.

SUCCESS were illy gotten gain,
If over rich and self completed,
It sneered with open fine disdain,
At poorer wights by Fate defeated.

But if sweet sympathy be given
In days of ease and days of plenty,
As one would give of silver coin,
To those with purses lean and empty,

Success were then a double gain ;
And though one's coffers were replete
With Eldorado's glittering gold,
It would imply no soul defeat.

VICTORY.

WOMEN wear the weakness
Of the feebly frail,
That in might of meekness
Conquers where men quail.

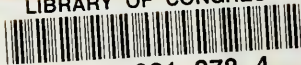
CHRISTMAS EVE.

THE clamoring days of the Springtime,
The faltering days of the Fall,
The jubilant days of the Summer
Lie dead till the Master's recall.

While desolate days of the Winter,
Soft clothed with the crimsoning sun,
Are dying that Christ's Day may enter
With peerless white glory begun.

THE END.

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